

## Montreal

# Quebec's COVID-19 curfew officially takes effect

Montreal police establish curfew unit to enforce new public health rules

[Isaac Olson](#) · CBC News · Posted: Jan 09, 2021 4:00 AM ET | Last Updated: January 10, 2021



**A look at the deserted Montreal landscape under curfew**

2 years ago | 2:00

Here's a unique view of the streets and highways of Montreal and Brossard, left empty by the province's COVID-19 curfew.

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Smartphones across Quebec buzzed Saturday with an emergency alert like no other: Be inside by 8 p.m., or face a fine.

In an open letter posted to Facebook, the province's premier said imposing an overnight curfew was a difficult, but necessary decision in order to limit the chances of Quebecers gathering illegally.

"The main reason for the curfew is to prevent gatherings, even the smallest ones," wrote François Legault. "It's the addition of all the small breaches of the rules that feeds the virus."

With this new rule in place, police have the power to stop and question anybody outdoors between 8 p.m. and 5 a.m.

"The police will also be very visible this weekend," the province's Public Security Minister Geneviève Guilbault said in a tweet Friday. "Let's stay at home, save lives."

Those without a valid reason to be out between those hours could face fines of between \$1,000 to \$6,000.

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On Saturday night, a handful of tickets were given out to small groups of a dozen or so anti-curfew protesters in Sherbrooke and Quebec City.

A similar demonstration garnered about 50 people in Montreal. According to Radio-Canada, Montreal police ticketed 17 people for violating the curfew.





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2 years ago | 3:54

As Quebec descends into its first quarantine curfew since the era of the Spanish flu, there are more rules to follow and fewer opportunities to bend them undetected.

"There will be about 100 extra police officers circulating in the city, to patrol, to be in the streets, to show that they are present, so people understand how important this is," Mayor Valérie Plante told CBC's Debra Arbec on Friday.

If people are out, Plante said, they will have to show proof to police that they have the right to be.

In Quebec City, several facilities, including outdoor skating rinks, will close at 7:30 p.m. to allow residents to rush home before the 8 p.m. deadline.

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Extra security guards will be brought in to ensure people don't skate too late at the popular rinks, and staff will be doubled in areas where extra surveillance may be needed to ensure everybody is staying safe while enjoying the few activities still allowed in the province,

**Geneviève Guilbault**   
@GGuilbaultCAQ · [Follow](#)



Une communication Québec En Alerte sera émise demain pour aviser tous les citoyens de l'entrée en vigueur du couvre-feu. Les policiers seront également très visibles ce weekend. Un ultime effort parallèlement à la vaccination qui se poursuit. Restons chez nous, sauvons des vies.

3:59 PM · Jan 8, 2021



634



See the latest COVID-19 information on Twitter

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## Curfew is justifiable, civil rights lawyer says

While it's inevitable that police will hand out fines, civil rights lawyer Julius Grey hopes most people will do exactly what they are asked — stay home so as to limit the spread of the virus as the province's health-care network strains against the rising caseload.



Montreal, known for its vibrant, colourful nightlife, will be off limits to those hoping to take a late-night stroll for the next 4 weeks. Unless, of course, they have a dog with them. (Daniel Thomas/Radio-Canada)

If people don't respect the curfew it's justifiable in the current context to hand out reasonable fines, he said.

However, he would like to see police start by warning people to go home rather than immediately resorting to tickets. As long as there are necessary exemptions, the province has every right to impose exceptional measures in the interest of public security, Grey said.

"\$6,000 is rather high, but I also think that it is not high enough to constitute cruel and unusual punishment," he said.

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With fees, the minimum fine hovers around \$1,500. Grey expects it will be those who commit multiple offences or are obstinate who will receive higher fines.

## Montreal police asked to consider individual situations

It is important that police do not resort to profiling or targeting certain groups, Grey said, and it is best that citizens co-operate with law enforcement if stopped, as everybody should be doing their part to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Plante said her administration has been discussing with Montreal police not just about the importance of enforcing the curfew, but also about listening to every person and their situation.



While many homeless in Montreal prefer to stay out of shelters due to strict rules and risk of catching COVID-19, Quebec's premier says they must go inside while the curfew is in place. 'There are places set up for them,' he said. (Jean-Claude Taliana/Radio-Canada)

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"Especially around vulnerable people," she said.

"I am thinking about people in a situation of homelessness. We don't want to give them fines they cannot pay. We need to bring them to different resources that exist."

However, Legault made it clear on Wednesday that not having a home is [not an exception to the rule](#). He said there is enough space in shelters.

"What we would like is for the homeless to also go indoors," he said. "There are places set up for them."

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*With files from Radio-Canada and Debra Arbec*

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